Memorial to William Harvey Gross
1917–1987

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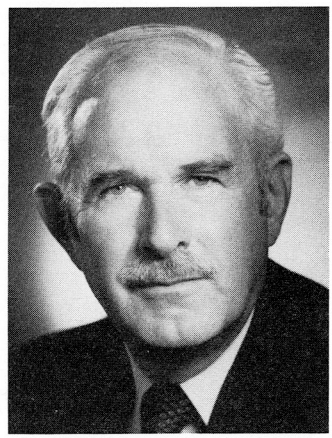

William Harvey Gross, miner, wartime pilot, geologist, professor, consultant, mining executive, and founder of several mining companies, passed away after a brief illness on August 6, 1987.

Bill Gross was born in New Westminster, British Columbia, on December 5, 1917. Like many young men during the Depression, he worked his way through the University of British Columbia, staying out during alternate years to finance his way. It took him seven years to complete a five-year course in geological engineering; he graduated with a B.A. Sc. in 1942. After graduating, he joined the Canadian Air Force and flew Halifax bombers from England over Germany during World War II. With help from the Veterans Affairs Department, Bill continued his education after the war at the University of Toronto. He received his M.A. in 1947 and his Ph.D. in 1950.

Bill married Shirley Wismer on April 19, 1943. They had two sons, Stephen William and John Harvey. They were a close-knit family. Shirley made a "home" out of many houses, apartments, or hotel rooms—wherever Bill stopped long enough for her to get organized.

Bill became interested in mining during his student years, working at the Bralorne mine in British Columbia. He progressed from mucker to miner during these years—a time when there were plenty of fellows at the portal ready to take the place of anyone who failed to make his round per shift. Prior to enrolling at the University of Toronto in 1946, Bill formed a consulting company with Paul and Mike Young. The post-war gold boom was on, and they did work for many small companies, including Anglo Rouyn near Noranda, and the Armistice Gold Mine that was being developed near Virginiatown by Joe Hirshhorn. At the University of Toronto, Bill led a hectic life as an active partner in a consulting firm and a student attending lectures, giving lectures himself, and writing his doctoral thesis. He became a part-time lecturer in 1948 when E. S. Moore retired. The new head of the geology department, George Langford, asked Bill to teach Moore's courses until a replacement could be found. Bill ended up teaching for the next 20 years, finally resigning from the university in 1968. During those years, Langford encouraged him to keep up his contacts in the mining industry so that he could introduce aspects of the real world into the lecture room, which the students seemed to appreciate.

During his university career, Bill published a number of scientific papers on such subjects as the practical application of sulfur isotopes, remanent magnetism, and radioactivitiy in rocks. These papers were early ventures into new fields and were designed to develop new geological techniques to help find ore bodies. Several of the papers were translated into other languages, including Russian and Japanese.

Bill was part of the new era in Canadian mining that began when uranium was opened to prospecting in 1948. His consulting group joined with others to form the American Canadian Uranium Company. Their prospecting resulted in the Rix Athabasca Uranium Mine. The scintillation counter, which made possible airborne prospecting for uranium, was invented by two University of Manitoba physicists, Pringle and Ralston. Bill persuaded the South Australian Department of Mines to try the equipment, and the world's first airborne scintillation survey was done over the flat desert

region around Radium Hill. Bill piloted the Mark I Anson plane himself. The work resulted in the discovery of a radioactive carbonatite called Crocker Wells.

Although the consulting firm founded by Bill Gross and the Youngs was dissolved in 1950, Bill maintained an active consulting practice throughout his career as a teacher of economic geology and mineral economics. A large part of his consulting work, which took him to many parts of the world, was done with Thayer Lindsley and his many companies. Bill often stated that Lindsley was a great mine developer who had a positive and lasting influence on his life. Bill also did work for A. J. Anderson and for Teck Corporation, under the direction of Norman Keevil. In addition, he worked with American, Danish, English, French, and Australian mining concerns, as well as other Canadian firms. In the course of his travels, he acquired an interest in a gold mine in Brazil, owned part of a diamond dredging operation in Guyana, and found a molybdenite deposit in Greenland. He was also one of the stakers of the Deese Lake copper deposit in Canada.

While teaching a course in mineral economics in 1964 and doing consulting work for Teck Corporation's Silverfields mine at Cobalt, Bill became very much interested in silver. At that time, silver was 92 cents per ounce. Bill's studies indicated that the consumption of silver was greater than production, and that the shortfall was being made up by sales from the U.S. Treasury stockpile. It was apparent that the price of silver should increase when stockpile sales were stopped: Bill believed that the time was right for acquiring potential silver-producing properties. He started looking for them in Peru and Chile, as well as in Canada. In 1965, in association with A. J. Anderson, W. S. Eplett, E. L. Samuel, R. G. Crompton, and Wilfred McKinnon, some silver claims were acquired near Teslin in the Yukon. The group formed a public company to raise risk capital and submitted 15 proposed names to the Custodian of Names. The one approved was Pure Silver Mines, Limited. After developing the Yukon property, Pure Silver started exploring in what had been one of the world's richer silver-producing areas, the Guanajuato area of Mexico. The company's activity was based on a geological theory of Bill's concerning a possible deep-faulted offset of the Veta Madre silver vein. Pure Silver acquired a large land position in the area in 1967 and, with Compania Fresnillo and Industrias Penoles as partners, Compania Minera Las Torres was formed as a Mexicanized operating company in which Pure Silver had a 30% interest. Bill's theory was proven correct when the first drill hole cut a 33.3-foot section of vein at a depth of 1500 feet. The vein graded 17 ounces of silver and 0.13 ounces of gold per ton. Further drilling developed a major orebody, and a 2000-ton-per-day mill was built. Several other properties were then developed to feed the Las Torres Mill. The success of the Las Torres operation has done much to revive Guanajuato as a major silver-producing area.

To carry out exploration work elsewhere in Mexico, the Pure Silver partners formed Tormex Mining Developers, Limited, in 1969. A silver-lead property was developed in partnership with Industrias Penoles; it operated as La Encantada for many years. The partners also formed Lacanex Mining Company in 1969 to explore in Canada and the United States. Lacanex joined Cordex, a Nevada Exploration syndicate that has been successful in developing profitable gold mines from the Pinson, Preble, and Dee deposits.

Pure Silver, Tormex, and Lacanex merged in 1975 to form Lacana Mining Corporation. Bill served as chairman, president, and chief executive officer, guiding the company to its present status as an important international mining company. He resigned as chairman in February 1987, when Royex Gold Mining Corporation purchased the controlling interest in Lacana, but he stayed on as a director and member of the executive committee until his death.

Bill was a Fellow of the Geological Association of Canada, the Society of Economic Geologists, and the Geological Society of America. He was also a member of the Canadian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy, the Professional Engineers Association of Ontario, Phi Delta Theta fraternity, the Engineers Club of Toronto, the National Club, the Rosedale Golf Club, the Lyford Cay Club in Nassau, and the Atlantis Golf Club in Florida.

Bill was well known and respected worldwide through his influence on many students as a

teacher, and for his achievements in the search for and development of mineral resources. In recognition of his contributions to the field of economic geology, the Mineral Deposits Division of the Geological Association of Canada has established a new award—the William Harvey Gross Medal—to be given annually to a young geologist for outstanding contributions in the field of mineral deposits. The cash award is supported through an endowment fund provided by Lacana Mining Corporation. A second endowment, provided by Bill's family and friends, will contribute toward travel expenses for the winner to attend the annual meeting. The medal is a fitting tribute to one of the world's great economic geologists.

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